Minutes of 18 November 2005
Approved: 13 January 2006

Student Relations Advisory Committee
Friday, Nov 18, 2005
Bates Room
U-Club, Michigan Union


Absent: F. Cianciola, S. Eklund

Guests: R. Altamirano (International Center)
        P. Aqui Pacania (Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs)
        F. Mueller (International Center)
        B. McKeachie (Department of Psychology/ past-Director, CRLT)
        S. Wilson (Student Activities and Leadership)

Meeting called to order 11:58am

Chair welcomed Cianciola and Eklund, who represented the Division of Student Affairs.

The minutes for Oct 7 SRAC Meeting were reviewed and motioned for approval (G. Gunnell) and seconded (B. Seabury). Minutes passed unanimously.

Presentations and Discussion

Susan Wilson, Director, Office of Student Activities and Leadership, presented an update to the Committee on the Student Organization and Recognition (SOAR) Committee.

- there are 792 of 1100 student organizations that are on their way towards completing registration

- Wilson asked the Committee what would be the best way to communicate latest developments in Student Activities to faculty advisors.

- Concerns were raised that the Greek system previously felt as if SAL processes were usurping their authority. Wilson stated that the Greek system organizations would have to undergo the same procedures for registration as any other student group. It was noted that many Greek lettered organizations had successful models of self-governance, especially the Greek umbrella organizations like Panhellenic and Inter Fraternity Council. Additionally, many
Greek organizations enjoy the additional protections provided to them begin associated with the University, for example, additional liability coverage.

Faculty members discussed with SAL any potential conflicts re: groups that participate in specific lobbying activities. These groups, like one housed in the School of Social Work, use space in the School of Social Work and operate as a student group within the University, but participate in letter-writing and lobbying. While this specific instance is okay, Wilson expressed that the office is still working on codifying students' rights and responsibilities regarding lobbying as separate entities. Wilson said that the Office of General Counsel has been an important partner in assisting with interpreting and communicating many policies, including existing policies regarding lobbying and political action.

Wilson also mentioned that SOAR and SAL are continuing to develop materials and resources for faculty advisors.

SAL powerpoint presentation attached

Patricia Aqui Pacania, Director, Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs, presented the recommendations of the Trotter House Advisory Council. Additionally, Pacania presented the Committee with an overview of renovations to the Trotter Multicultural Center. Pacania solicited the observations and opinions of the Committee with regards to perceived campus climate, especially from their interactions with students in the classroom and other places outside of student affairs.

Several comments were made noting that students, for the most part, don't break out of their personal boundaries of comfort zones. Similarly, in some fields that are male-dominated, students seem comfortable with the status quo.

Seabury voiced a concern that often students may feel like they should act or respond in such a way that is "PC," or expected of them, but rarely know how to truly address conflict or tension that can be used as a learning opportunity.

Additional concerns were raised about the apparent lack of reflection space for student on North Campus.

MESA powerpoint attached

Frances Mueller, IC Project Manager, presented on improvements being made to the International Center's main services for international students and international faculty/visiting scholars. Since 9/11 requests for services have increased dramatically, especially since the Department of Homeland Security's
requirements and timelines have changed. To meet this need, the International Center has undergone a host of changes to assist international students.

- International center powerpoint attached

Professor Bill McKeachie provided the SRAC with a brief history of the use of student course evaluations. While often it is perceived that the data itself is problematic, it is actually the use of the data that causes problems and controversy. Prof. McKeachie noted that there is more research about student ratings than other topic.

- Committee members Borock and Wiggins expressed that they found the course evaluations to be helpful in some instances and awkward in others. There was a general feeling that GSIs valued the feedback more than tenured full professors.

- Wiggins noted that there is also a website where students can "rate" the course and teacher, this website is independent from a department or University system of course evaluations.

- Professor McKeachie provided background readings on the issue of student course evals, the citations are included.

Wiggins announced that the Michigan Student Assembly recently passed a resolution in support of the addition of gender identity and expression to the by-laws of the University.

- Eklund noted that the current understanding and use of "gender" in by-laws includes gender identity and expression

Motion to adjourn Koopman, seconded by Wiggins.

Meeting adjourned 1:31p.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gabe Javier
SRAC Intern

Attachments to the Minutes

PowerPoint Presentation: Intl Center
PowerPoint Presentation: SOAR
PowerPoint Presentation: MESA
Citations for articles discussed by Prof. McKeachie